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Ray Murder Case Explained to Club

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A bedspread wrapped around a rifle and overnight bag turned out to be key pieces of evidence that pointed to James Earl Ray as the assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King, a Memphis investigator said today at the weekly luncheon of the Memphis Sertoma Club at the Sheraton-Peabody Hotel.

The speaker was John L. Carlisle, criminal investigator for the State District Attorney General's office, who worked with FBI agents and Memphis police in investigating King's April 4, 1968, slaying.

Carlisle discussed the evidence prepared by the state against Ray. This evidence became part of the public court record when Ray pleaded guilty and accepted a 99-year sentence last year.

The bedspread, bag and rifle were abandoned in front of Canipe's Amusement Co., 424 S. Main, a few minutes after Dr. King was shot as he was standing on the Lorraine Motel balcony about a block away, Carlisle said.

"The bedspread contained fibers from the trunk of Ray's white Mustang, which he later abandoned in Atlanta, Ga., and the bedspread also contained fibers from the bed in the room upstairs (over Canipe's) which was rented by Ray under the alias John Willard," Carlisle said.

FBI laboratory tests confirmed these fibers as well as Ray's fingerprints on clothing inside the overnight bag, Carlisle said. The evidence indicated that all three objects were in Ray's possession prior to the slaying, were carried up to the room, and then dropped in front of Canipe's after the fatal shot was fired.

The items were found only a few feet from the stairway leading up to the rooming house and only a few feet from where witnesses said Ray's white Mustang had been parked, he added.

Carlisle also showed slides and photographs of the area.

A bathroom window overlooked the balcony of the Lorraine Motel on Mulberry Street, and the bathroom itself was only several yards down the hall from the room vealed that there was indentation in the bathroom's window sill, and that the trigger guard of the rifle found downstairs fitted into the indentation, he said.

Ray, who has been turned down by the Tennessee Supreme Court for a new trial, contends now that he is innocent. In an article published by author William Bradford Huie, Ray said that a blond haired Latin named Raoul provided him with money to buy the rifle and Mustang and that he was acting under instructions of Raoul when he came to Memphis.

A joint investigation by the FBI, and the Attorney General's office produced no evidence that Ray was ever associated with such a man, or that Ray had any assistance in planning or carrying out the assassination, Carlisle said.